

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this Patent Application, particularly in view of the above Amendment.

The fee for the additional independent claim added by this Amendment is enclosed. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fee deficiency or to credit any fee overpayment to Deposit Account 19-3550.

Amendment to Claims

Applicants have amended Claim 1 by adding the limitations of Claim 35. Applicants believe that Claim 1 now represents the independent form of Claim 35.

Applicants have amended Claim 7 to form a proper antecedent basis.

Claim 17 has been amended by adding limitations of each of Claims 1-16. Applicants believe that Claim 17 is now in independent form.

Applicants have amended each of Claims 34 and 36 by adding the limitations of Claim 1. Thus, Applicants believe that each of Claim 34 and 36 is in independent form.

Applicants have amended Claim 35 to depend upon Claim 17 rather than Claim 1.

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The above Amendment adds no new matter to this Patent Application.

Claim Objection

Claim 7 has been objected to for the reason set forth at Page 2 of the Office Action. Applicants have amended Claim 7 to form a proper antecedent basis. Applicants believe that the above Amendment and remarks overcome the objection to Claim 7.

Claims Rejection - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-3 and 23 have been objected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as being anticipated by Buse, U.S. Patent 6,491,535. Applicants believe that this rejection is rendered moot in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks.

Claims Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-16 and 24-32 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as being unpatentable over one or more of Buse, U.S. Patent 6,491,535, Nowell, U.S. Patent 5,784,841, and Welch et al., U.S. Patent 5,670,743, for the reasons set forth at Pages 4-10, of the Office Action.

Applicants presume that Page 7 of the Office Action contains a typographical error, and that Paragraph 7 should read *Claims 4-16, 25, 27-32 are rejected* in lieu of the printed text which reads *Claims 4-15, 25, 27-32 are rejected*. If Applicants' presumption is incorrect, Applicants request the Examiner to contact the undersigned, by telephone.

Applicants believe that the above Amendment and the following remarks overcome each rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Allowable Subject Matter

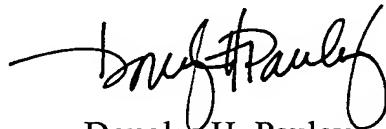
Applicants understand that Claims 17-22 and 34-36 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Applicants have amended each of Claims 1, 17, 34 and 36 into independent and allowable form.

Because each remaining dependent claim ultimately depends upon and further limits an allowable independent claim, Applicants believe that each pending claim is now in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the above Amendment and remarks address each and every issue raised by the Examiner and overcome each and every objection and rejection. However, should the Examiner detect any remaining issue, Applicants kindly request the Examiner to contact the undersigned, preferably by telephone, in an effort to expedite examination of this Patent Application.

Respectfully submitted,



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